

# U.S. Immigration Policy

*An ever-growing challenge*

BY TRACY CANADA, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NPG

With so many headlines about immigration — border security, unemployment, amnesty, DREAMers — it's hard to know what the *real* story is. Politicians warn that aging baby boomers will drain America's safety nets of Social Security and Medicare, ensuring that more young immigrant workers are the solution to preserving our future. News stories show images of young undocumented aliens, faces not unlike those of our own children and grandchildren, and we are accused of being “un-American” — or worse — if we question the logic of continuing to increase our nation's population. How are we to know the right answer? What *should* America's immigration policy be, if we are to *both* protect the quality of life for future generations and respect our heritage as a nation of immigrants?

For NPG, immigration is strictly about numbers: increasing America's population will only worsen our problems and jeopardize our sustainability as a nation. In order to effectively address the controversy, we must break down some of the common misconceptions about immigration — legal and illegal — and review the data alone. And the *facts* about immigration show just how deeply it is affecting America's future.

A 2008 study by the Pew Research Center<sup>1</sup> concluded that immigration — legal, illegal, and the children of immigrants — is the driving force behind America's increasing size, responsible for 80 percent of our population growth. The U.S. is already vastly overpopulated, in terms of the long-term carrying capacity of our environment and resources — yet we continue to grow. The Census Bureau estimates<sup>2</sup> America's current population at *over 317 million people — growing by 1 person every 16 seconds* — and conservatively projects

that we will reach 400 million by mid-century. That's an increase of 83 million people in just 36 years. And currently proposed immigration increases — now favored by both political parties — *would increase that projection by as much as 10 percent*<sup>3</sup> (if enacted).

Let us consider some of the other facts about America's immigration policies:

- According to FAIR,<sup>4</sup> from 2001–2011 total U.S. legal immigrant admission was *10,436,527 people*. The real numbers are likely much higher, as this estimate does not include various *long-term* “temporary” immigrant categories.

- From 1970 to 2010, U.S. population grew by approximately 33 percent. Over the same period, the foreign-born U.S. population grew by *416 percent*.

- Based on current data, The Heritage Foundation<sup>5</sup> found that if America grants another amnesty, *each adult illegal immigrant will cost taxpayers \$592,000* over the course of his/her lifetime.

- The 1986 Amnesty *legalized over 3 million immigrants*. The Center for Immigration Studies<sup>6</sup> found that it cost taxpayers nearly *\$79 billion after just 10 years*.

- It is estimated<sup>7</sup> that the current illegal immigrant population is *over 11.5 million people* — nearly 4 times the size of the 1986 immigrant population. Due to the secretive nature of illegal immigration, some studies have found that the *actual number of illegal residents may be double* what the government estimates.<sup>8</sup>

- After the 1986 Amnesty was passed — with the same caveats we're hearing today: border security, enforcement, and “this is a one-time deal” — America saw a *dramatic increase in immigration*.<sup>9</sup>

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. unemployment<sup>10</sup> was at 6.7 percent in February 2014 — nearly 20.8 million

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Americans are unemployed, underemployed, or discouraged. Some estimates found those numbers at *over 14 percent*<sup>11</sup> — *46 million American citizens*. The U.S. is not short on workers — it is short on employment.

• *75 percent of Americans want no increase of U.S. immigration levels.*<sup>12</sup> And 73 percent of likely U.S. voters feel that low-skilled jobs can be filled by unemployed Americans. Politicians are the only ones who want to increase immigration — and the only ones who think Americans “won’t do” certain jobs.

The facts about immigration are simple: it dramatically increases U.S. population size, it helps very few refugees, and it costs taxpayers billions of dollars. In addition, illegal immigration has become a significant source of cheap labor to save costs for large industries (cutting more jobs from Americans). This is not an issue of DREAMers, nor the hopes of “huddled masses.” This is about taking away *our* American Dream, and awarding it to those who have knowingly deceived our laws — and to the corporations who are neatly evading American workers.

Another amnesty will not save our economy or our future — it will damage them both for generations. As we continue to add to our population, the everyday problems we face as Americans will only grow worse. Traffic congestion, urban sprawl, crowded schools and hospitals, crumbling infrastructure, rising taxes, high unemployment rates, fierce competition and soaring costs for higher education, pollution, overdevelopment, endangered and extinct species, dwindling natural resources... *Which of these problems is not caused — or made worse — by population growth?*

Our national immigration policy calls for a constant infusion of young immigrants so that our labor force can continue to grow, thus feeding the growth of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and increasing the size of our population. The growth of both areas — GDP and total population — is wrongly considered to be essential to our national and individual well-being. Consider, for instance, Scandinavian nations over the last decade. In Finland, the GDP has remained strong — with a 2012 population growth rate of just 0.5 percent and a total fertility rate of less than the United States. Clearly, increasing population growth is not a requirement for any nation to enjoy a high standard of living. Japan provides another good example of a powerful nation with an aging population and low fertility rates, yet their economy remains strong despite virtually no immigration.

It is worth noting that, although advocates of mass immigration warn that our population is aging, the number of immigrants over age 55 is considerable — largely

due to our emphasis on family reunification. Today’s young American immigrants will eventually grow old and retire. They will need to be replaced by another generation of young immigrants, perpetuating a never-ending cycle. What we have, therefore, is an immigration system — both legislated and implicit — designed to produce the endless growth of our population.

The standard arguments that technological advances will save us from pollution and resource exhaustion ring hollow. Pollution of our air and water has reached dangerous levels — with no technological solution in sight. Most investment in technology now goes into developing machines and procedures that will *increase* the pace of resource depletion.

*We urgently need to begin the transition to a far smaller population size.*<sup>13</sup> After a period of negative growth, we can reduce the demands on America’s resources and stabilize at a sustainable level. At present, our nation consumes far too many resources and emits far too much waste and pollution to be sustainable. This means we are only prolonging the inevitable truth: we must reduce — not increase — our immigration and population levels. Only then can we preserve our environment, economy, and overall quality of life for generations to come. ■

### Endnotes

1. February 11, 2008. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2008/02/11/us-population-projections-2005-2050/>
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